

## Improving Outreach to Underserved Communities

### Background and Purpose

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Hispanic/Latino adults with mental illness are less likely to receive mental health care when compared to the U.S. average (34% versus 45%)<sup>1</sup>. NAMI identifies several barriers this population faces when attempting to obtain mental health services including language, lack of medical insurance, legal status, and stigma finding culturally competent care. A similar pattern emerged for Latino individuals with substance use disorder (SUD). Less than 9 percent of Hispanic/Latinos with a SUD received treatment, relative to the U.S. average 12.2 percent<sup>2</sup>. The purpose of this project is to collect information to assist with engaging individuals from the Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish population in need of mental health and substance use disorder treatment, with a focus on reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the population of people receiving treatment and services in the Proposition 47 Grant program.

While there is no expectation of proportional racial distribution relative to the population in Proposition 47 grant programs, for the current project, the racial distribution of adult participants who received services through the Proposition 47 grant program was compared to the racial distribution of arrest rates in the county. For both Cohort 1 and 2 (first two years only), almost half of Proposition 47 grantees served proportionally fewer individuals who identified as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin relative to the proportion of Hispanics, Latino, or Spanish individuals arrested for felony property or drug crimes. While there may be various explanations for this discrepancy (e.g., Los Angeles City Attorney's Office's grant program targets a specific zip code within Los Angeles County, which may not have a large Hispanic/Latino population), the high percentage of grantees underserving this population should be examined so BSCC staff can provide better technical assistance. Grantees may be aware of this discrepancy in their participant population, but unsure how to address the problem. This project and subsequent documents will provide grantees resources that identifies effective strategies for engaging, recruiting, and retaining Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish participants.

For this project, BSCC staff would complete semi-structured focus group interviews with staff from the lead agency who received Proposition 47 funding, partner CBOs, and current and/or former participants. Grantees asked to participate in this project will be those who have either consistently excelled at serving participants who identify as Hispanic, Latino or Spanish or have substantially increased the proportion of these participants over time.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions/Hispanic-Latinx>, retrieved May 17, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/data-we-collect/nsduh-national-survey-drug-use-and-health>, retrieved May 19, 2022.

### Semi-Structured Focus Group Interviews

The two primary purposes of these interviews are to 1) explore approaches to effectively recruit, engage, and retain Hispanic, Latino or Spanish participants; and 2) obtain participants' perspectives on the program from Hispanic, Latino or Spanish participants and compare them to the perspectives of participants of other races. Specifically, through semi-structured interviews, insight into effective practices and procedures that have resulted in higher proportion of participants who identify as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish will be gained. These effective strategies will then be shared with current and future grantees to improve the recruitment, engagement, and/or retention of these participants.

At least four separate focus groups will be comprised for this project:

1. Representatives from the lead agencies (e.g., project directors)
2. Community-Based Organization (CBO) staff who work directly with participants
3. CBO supervisors and/or managers
4. Current and/or former participants

Grantees will be asked to recruit participants with approximately half identifying as Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin. Current and/or former participants must have received either mental health or substance use treatment while in the program, have been enrolled for at least 30 days, and be at least 18 years of age. To compensate participants for their time, they will receive a \$50 gift card<sup>3</sup>.

Interviews will be conducted via an online meeting platform (Zoom). Interviews will be recorded and later analyzed to identify themes and effective strategies. All interview participants will sign a consent form prior to participating and complete a brief survey reporting their race and gender for demographic purposes, which will only be reported in aggregate form. Additionally, once on the Zoom call, all individuals interviewed, will be asked to provide verbal consent to participating and to record their responses. In addition to stating this in the consent form, assurances will be verbally provided to participants that any comments made will remain anonymous, and no names or agency information will be associated with statements in the meeting transcript or project report. Additionally, the grantees/agencies that participated in the interviews will not be disclosed and no information will be tied to a specific grantee/agency/individual. Participants will not be required to answer questions. Once the recordings of the Zoom meetings have been transcribed and the accuracy verified, the video recordings will be destroyed.

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<sup>3</sup> Because lead agency and CBO staff will be completing the interview during work hours, no additional compensation will be provided to these groups.